BALLARAT FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET - JULY 1976.

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NEXT MEETING: Friday 2nd July 8 p.m. at Ballarat School of Mines, Lydiard St. Sth. SPEAKER: Mr. L. Millar - "Camera on Nature".

NEXT EXCURSION: Sunday 4th July. Linton - Working bee - Mr. G. Clarke Cars leave Crockers 9.30 a.m.

LAST MEETING: Guest speaker at our 4th June meeting was Mr. John Clements, local Fisheries and Wildlife Officer, who spoke on "Deer in Australia". He firstly pointed out that although they are not native to Australia, deer do no apparent harm, and in this regard can be compared to a few other introduced species such as Song Thrush, Trout and Squirrel.

Australia has no native game mammals, so the deer fill this role. They provide a real challenge to the hunter and a hunter may follow a particular stag for some years to get a trophy of a good head of antlers. Although they provide meat (venison) and hides, it is the antlers that are the main aim of the hunter.

It was of interest to us to learn that 13 species of deer have at some time been introduced into Australia and there are 4 species reasonably established in Victoria: Sambar, Hog, Red and Fallow. The Sambar herd in the Mt. Cole range is of particular significance, as they belong to the Indian race, as compared to the south-east Asian race elsewhere in Victoria. Being isolated at Mt. Cole, they have retained their pure bred status. They like the thick wet type of forest, despite preference in their native India for a dry woodland habitat.

We learned about the shape and development of antlers; the habit of rubbing them on trees; the fact that stags can be called up if their call is imitated; the existence of a deer farm near Gisborne and that the population of Hog Deer in South Gippsland may become very significant in the conservation of that species, as its numbers in south-east Asia are becoming low. Lastly we had a look at deer in New Zealand where they are numerous and need control.

Contributed-Roger Thomas.

JUNE EXCURSION - FUNGI - CRESWICK: Mr. Sonsee took us to Oak Gully, an interesting area behind the F. C. Nursery, where we searched for fungi under conifers and self-sown oaks. About twenty members were present and all searched enthusiastically, but few fungi could be found because of the dry autumn. However some specimens of Russula and Trametes were found under the pines, and when we moved to the eucalypt forest we saw a fine specimen of "Loaf of bread fungus" (formerly polyporus eucalyptorum) high on the trunk of a gum. We also found some specimens of marasmius. During the afternoon a number of lichens were gathered: horsehair lichen, pyxie cups, boulder lichen, ladder lichen and dog lichen. Contributed - Mrs. F. Chuk.

TOURING MEMBERS: The Frys are reported to be enjoying their overseas trip. Too busy to write but Edith has had a number of postcards and taped descriptions of their tour. After a cruise down the Rhine, they went to London and are now touring England, Scotland and Wales. Their itinerary took them past Loch Ness but Edith is certain that if they had sighted "Nessy", she would have had a phone call! In June they will return to the Continent, then on to Ireland in July, returning to Ballarat later in the month.

Florence Williamson is looking forward to a 3 week safari trip to "The Centre" early July. Early August sees the Bedggoods off to Innamincka, and Esther McLenehan to Surfer's Paradise. We wish these folk happy holidaying and a safe return.

CONGRATULATIONS to Roger Thomas on his appointment as Ranger of the Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo, N.S.W., as from 21st June. We wish you every success and happiness in your future work Roger, and thank you most sincerely for loyal support and your outstanding contribution to the Club over the years. (We are very pleased that Roger has not resigned from the club and will keep in touch)

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTIONS: Those members who have not already paid, are reminded that 1976/77 subscriptions are due. Adults $1.50 Juniors 50c.

GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB is appealing for funds for a new publication "The Care of Sick, Injured and Orphaned Native Birds and Animals." Their aim is to print 30,000 copies for distribution through out Australia. The RSPCA and Gould League have congratulated the Club on the project and a foreword has been written by Roy Wheeler, MBE.

The important feature of this brochure is the saving of birds and animals which come to grief. Already three wallabies are being reared successfully on a special diet featured in the booklet, and a koala was restored to fitness after shocking burns in a bushfire. The club has also reared an orphaned koala, and successfully released Galah, Fairy Penguin, White-backed Magpies, Little Raven, Peewee, Kestrel etc. In a report in the Geelong Club's news sheet, Mr. Jack Wheeler has asked for support for the project by any donations, small or large. These may be sent to him as convenor, or to treasurer Mrs. Valda Dedman, 69 North Valley Road, Highton. Mr. Wheeler's address is 72 James Street, Belmont.

M. J. Rotheram.

WIRRIMBIRRA: As mentioned at the June meeting, I have been appointed Ranger of the Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo, 100 km south of Sydney on the Hume Highway. The following is a brief description of the Sanctuary.

97 Hectares (240 acres) in area, it is divided in two by the Sydney to Melbourne railway. The area most used by visitors is located between the highway and railway and is about 5 hectares. This is the administration area containing office, two residences, display area, nursery (open to the public) field study centre (controlled by the Education Department and staffed by a full time teacher) and five cabins, each of 8 bunks, to accommodate 40 school children for a night or two as they work on their environmental studies. The buildings blend in reasonably well with the bushland and the majority of this 5 ha has been planted with native shrubs and trees, so is of special interest to anyone keen on native gardens.

The planted trees and shrubs have been grouped in family plantings in some cases, while in other areas they are all mixed and growing together. The wattle section contains some 70 or so species.

Wirrimbirra is not a NSW State Government project - it is managed by the David G. Stead Memorial Wildlife Research Foundation. 42 hectares is free-hold; the remainder is Crown Land under the trusteeship of the National Trust.

The large area over the railway line is very diverse in habitat and its only development has been the construction of small walking tracks. Parts of it are like our own local bushland (e.g. Enfield) while others are very heathy and swampy; there are attractive streams flowing over sandstone rocks and a large creek with thick vegetation and some ferns. In one area, the vegetation consists mainly of ironbark trees and grass, with no other understorey. Some plants of interest include Banksia spinulosa, Sunshine Wattle, Mirbelia, Scribbly Gum, Grey Gum, Wax-flower, Swamy Heath, Geebungs and Paperbarks. The birdlist at present stands at 88 species and includes Variegated Wren, White-throated Warbler, Rock Warbler, Black-chinned and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebird, Heath-wren, Ground Thrush, Weebill, Peaceful Dove and Double-barred Finch.

Wirrimbirra has great potential as a conservation-education centre and will undoubtedly become more popular as time goes by. The staff consists of a Ranger, two part-time nurserymen and a part-time groundsman.

I shall keep in touch with Club affairs by way of the news-sheet and, like Miss Herbert, may write a note from time to time.

Please call in to Wirrimbirra if you are up that way at any time. My address is Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, Hume Highway, BARGO, NSW. 2574.

Contributed - Roger Thomas.

TAXIDERMY: During 1975 a Churchill scholarship enabled a Victorian to study taxidermy overseas for 6 months.

Ballarat once had an excellent taxidermist - the late Mr. Robt. Smith, who gained his knowledge by his own efforts, using information locally available. When our F.N.C. was formed, Mr. Smith resumed his hobby amid the upsurge of enthusiasm we all felt. It was then on a trip to L. Goldsmith that we first saw a pink eared duck and Mrs. Smith told us about the most unusual articles appearing in their family room and in the ice chest. Mr.'s Smith, though not an experienced naturalist, must have been very sensitive to poise, or to the lack of it. In 1956 the FWD acquired Mr. Smiths collection of mounted creatures. He was honoured at the Museum, and was known interstate and in Europe. A pair of parrots mounted by him are treasured at the Berne Museum.

Contributed by Miss Herbert.

REMEMBERING ROGER COWLEY.

"Whoso, to dull and narrow lives
Doth ope the skies wide blue,
The gold of sunset, rose of dawn,
The diamond gleam of dew;
Vast space on space of free fresh air,
Green hilltops, outlook new,
And forest paths but seldom trod,
He who doth this doth walk with God."
(J.R.Lowell)

Contributed by Miss O. Herbert.

ROSETTE ROCK REPRIEVED: A unique geological formation known as the Rosette Rock, a main attraction of the Organ Pipes National Park at Keilor, has been guaranteed preservation. Believed to be about one million years old, the rock was on privately-owned land that banked the river gorge that forms the park. The land, which contains some important species of the Keilor Plains flora, has now been added to the park.

The Government, after considerable negotiations by the Ministry of Conservation's Planning Section, was forced for the first time to compulsorily acquire the land under the new Section 22F of the Lands Act. The owner had started building a large house above the rock which would also be clearly visible to visitors from every point in the park.

FROM CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF VICTORIA Newsletter: Recently I noticed the scientific name for Galahs was Cacatua roseicapilla. I had always thought that Cockatoo was an Aboriginal word but this made me wonder if it was a corruption of the Latin, or if the ornithological name was derived from the native word. I asked Mr. Jack Wheeler - with this interesting reply. He said Kakatoe, the original word on the RAOU checklist, came from the French work cockatoo (kakatoes) which was said to have come from a Malay word, which in turn might have an Aboriginal origin? Cacatua is the new genus listed in the new RAOU checklist in 1975. In Slater the genus is Eolophus - more confusion!

M. J. Rotheram.

A Texas statistician with nothing better to do has worked out that if you have a 500g blanket on your bed and breathe the average of 16 times a minute during an hour sleep, you have lifted the equivalent of 16 ts. So who's for sleeping with only a sheet?

What kind of club
would my club be
If every member was just like me?

BHL

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